

PRODUCTIVE LEGUME PASTURES



CASE STUDY #3

BRENTON MOSEY, WEEROONA MERINO EWES AND LAMB NGAPALA, MID NORTH

ABOUT THE PROPERTY

Location: Ngapala, Mid North SA

Size: 2000ha

Enterprise: 1600 merino ewes, usually running 2500 ewes but all crossbred ewes and dry stock have been sold. Cropping paddocks are leased to a neighbour (canola, wheat, beans)

Soil: red brown clay loam, acidic with shallow soil and rocky reefs

Annual Rainfall: average = 500mm, 2024 = 250mm

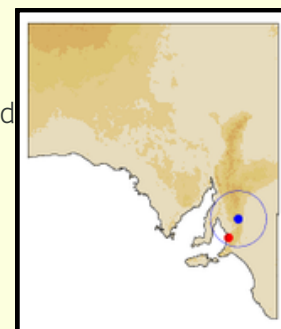


Image: Bureau of Meteorology

PASTURE MANAGEMENT AND LIVESTOCK SYSTEM

Persistent Pasture Species: pastures include crops stubbles, native grasses under sown with legumes. Annual grasses such as wild oats and silver grass are also prevalent. Subclover cv Clare has been quite successful, as well as Balansa clover cv Bolta. Brenton has previously had success with perennial grasses (Ryegrass and Phalaris), but recent reductions in summer rainfall has caused them to fail

Role of legumes: Legumes play a critical role in improving feed quality to promote lamb and wool production



Subclover cv Clare (Photo: NSW DPI)

MANAGING A DRY SEASON

To manage a dry year, the farm employs several strategies to ensure its livestock system remains resilient. In 2024/2025, a key part of this has been a significant reduction in sheep numbers. The early trigger for this is poor ground cover in Spring. Subsequently, if no summer rains or thunderstorms arrive by March, the farm destocks further. The remaining livestock are placed in containment to limit their grazing pressure on deteriorating pastures, where they are fed Johnson's ewe and lamb hay-based pellets.

The farm usually produces its own hay, this year only cut 37 bales from 100 acres. The Barley silos are full, but they are considering selling this grain in favour of the more complete ration offered by pellets.



Subclover burr (Photo: H Griffiths)



Weeroona, Heinrich's Middle (Photo: H Griffiths)

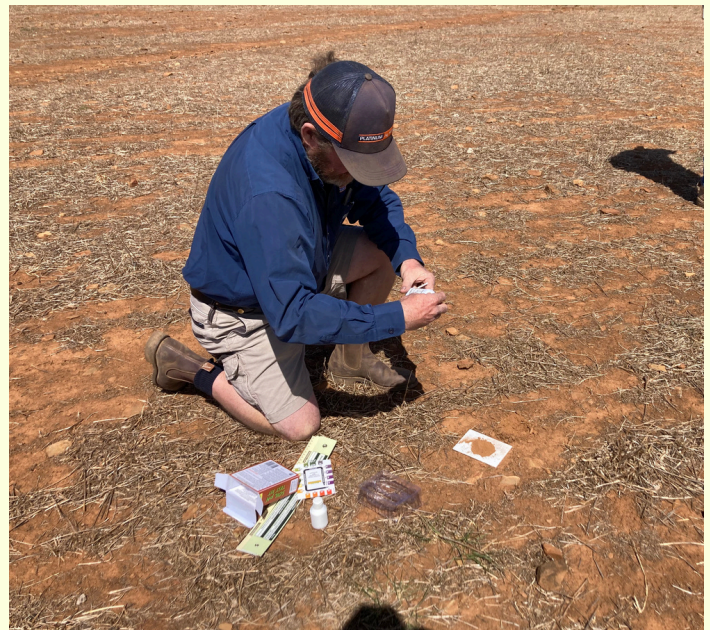
FUTURE DIRECTIONS

If conditions remain dry, Brenton is looking at improving feedlot infrastructure and introducing lick feeders. Additionally, if 2025 brings another poor Spring he is contemplating is moving from breeding ewes to a trade enterprise model. This change would reduce reliance on rainfall and allow the farm to purchase sheep for grazing stubbles or available feed rather than depending on year-round productivity of pastures. The decision to pursue a trade enterprise, would rely more heavily on feedlotting. As such, it depends on assessing the profitability of running a feedlot and ensuring the logistics and nutrition requirements are understood and well-managed.

"I hate to see dusty paddocks"

PASTURE IMPROVEMENT

If seasonal conditions improve, Brenton hopes to continue to work on his paddocks by applying of Single Super fertiliser, and lime to balance soil pH, and under sowing clover. Soil pH testing reported an average pH of 5.06 in 'Heinrich's Middle' a paddock that has been problematic for Brenton over the years. Testing on the day showed significant difference across the paddock, with the weedy sections up the hill testing at 4.8, while down the slope (less than 100m!) pH was sitting around 6. Potentially explaining differences in pasture establishment across the landscape



PASTURE OPTIMIZATION FOR DROUGHT SOLUTIONS
P.O.D.S.

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